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Archive for Monday, December 25, 2000

Archive for Monday, December 25, 2000

Construction of pipeline reaches halfway point

By Myndi Brogdon

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Construction of an 8-inch underground pipe that will stretch from Pine to Strawberry is about halfway done and will soon be capable of delivering up to 300,000 gallons of water.

The pipeline, named Project Magnolia, will connect the Pine and Strawberry water systems both owned and operated by Brooke Utilities allowing the water utility to shift water from one location to another to accommodate demands.

This past summer, 5 million gallons of water were hauled by truck to Pine, Brooke president Bob Hardcastle said. Much of that was taken from the Strawberry system.

Construction of the pipeline has an estimated price tag of \$300,000, said John Breninger, Brooke Utility spokesperson.

The demand in Pine is greater than the supply, Breninger said. The Pine water system that currently supplies those 1,800 customers produces between 160,000 and 260,000 gallons of water per day. And the trend for that production is dropping, Breninger said.

The more than 1,800 customers of Brooke Utilities in Pine reached Stage 5 the most severe restrictions in early May and remained there until mid-October when restrictions were reduced to Stage 4. Only this week have the conservation measures been relaxed from 4 to 3 and just this past Thursday to Stage 2.

Strawberry's 1,100 customers are connected to a system that produces between 390,000 to 470,000 gallons of water daily.

"Strawberry's water production has reached a plateau and is holding," Breninger said. The pipeline is tied into Strawberry at the 75,000-gallon storage tank located off Parkinson Road, just behind the Strawberry Lodge. The pipeline then basically follows the route of Old County Road. This road closely follows present-day Highway 87 and was the main route for the first settlers who commuted between Pine and Strawberry.

The pipeline actually crosses under the highway in two sections, both of those sections are complete and ready to be connected, Breninger said. The pipeline then connects in Pine at a 300,000-gallon storage tank located at the north end of town on Pinecone Trail.

The plan for the pipeline is to pump excess water from Strawberry to Pine to ease their water woes, Breninger said. Future plans include building a reservoir to contain the water and then in months with high demand the water can be pulled back into the system.

Weather permitting, the pipeline should be completed by the end of January.

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